

DOCTRINE OF GOD
1984
Taught by
Willis E. Bishop

(Typist's note:
No tape located for
this portion.
Typed from notes.)

Definition of God

The Bible does not give a complete definition of God.
God is infinite and perfect Spirit in whom all things have
their source, support and end. (Strong)

Something cannot come from nothing -- something has always
existed. Something exists -- either God or matter.
A self-existing person is no greater mystery than a
self-existing thing.

God is love	-	I John 4:8
God is light	-	I John 4:5
God is a consuming fire	-	Heb. 12:29
God is Spirit	-	John 4:24

Some Attributes or Characteristics of God

An attribute is a distinguishing characteristic (or quality)
or property fundamental and necessary to His Being.
They (the attributes) answer for us the question (in part)
"What is God like?"

The importance of the Scriptures in revealing what God
is like.

(Dionesius the Areopagite judge of Athens during the time
of Paul is said to have originated the rational method
of determining the attributes. But better to go from
revelation of Scripture. For example, cannot learn either
the Trinity or the mercy of God from nature.)

God is Spirit - John 4:24

Question 1: What does it mean "God is Spirit"?

Partial explanation: Luke 24:36-43

A spirit is not material substance
has no bodily form - vss. 39,40
cannot be known directly through
physical sense experience - vs. 39

Note: This is why God is called invisible.

Col. 1:15 [Christ] is the image of the invisible God.

Heb. 11:27 [Moses] endured as seeing Him who is invisible

John 4:17-24 God is not bound by any location but is everywhere - vss. 20:23

Observations: (1) a spirit is an incorporeal (no body or or form), invisible, living, personal being
(2) this is probably the main reason for prohibiting the worship of God through images - Ex. 20:4
there is nothing on earth that resembles Him!! "nor make unto thee any carved image like anything in heaven or in earth or water under the earth"

(Typist's note:
Following from tapes)

Last week we looked briefly at the fact that God is Spirit. We noted that our Lord explained, at least in part, what spirit is when He entered the locked room with the disciples on the evening after the resurrection and explained to them that a spirit did not have flesh and bones, could not be handled as He could be. And then in John chapter 4 in His discussion with the woman of Samaria He pointed out that God is everywhere present so that either "in this mountain" or in Jerusalem, or wherever one might be he could worship the Lord. That brings some problems, and so this second page begins with a number of questions which I trust we'll have some reasonable answers to.

Question 2: If no one has seen spirit, how do we know there is such a thing or person? I've given several answers.

For example, we know it by what it does in the realm of sense experience, such as electricity. Scientists tell us that we've never seen electricity. You can have a stove that heats by electricity, but you don't see the electricity. You have lights that work by electricity, but you don't see the electricity, you see the effects of it. You might even touch a socket and get a different kind of effect, but we've not seen electricity -- we know it by its effect. Also the wind. You can hear it as it goes through the trees, you get dust in your eyes, it will cool your body -- the north wind this morning, did you notice that? But we know there is such a thing as wind because we have seen the effects. Or love -- I wonder whether you get the idea. There are things we cannot see but we know them by the effects.

Second, we know it by the testimony of someone who does know, and that's one of the values of Christ's coming. John chapter 1, "No one has seen God at any time, but the Son, He has declared Him," or

"exegeted Him" as the Greek has it. So there are things we have not seen and we know about them because someone else has said so, and that's true in the case of spirit.

Comment & answer: The disciples once asked, "Show us the Father," and Christ said, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." That would be testimony of another kind. You've never seen my dad, you will never see him till you get to Glory, but if you want to know what my dad was like look at me. I'm not exactly the same -- he was a little taller than I, a little more bald than I, though I'm catching up to him. But a lot of his characteristics are characteristics which I have. In the hundred percent sense this was what Christ was saying concerning the Father.

Question 3. Since God is invisible, how do we explain such passages as Exodus 24:10, 11? This concerns a part of Moses' trip to Mount Sinai, and incidentally, he went up there more than one time -- I've traced, I think, at least seven times that he went up and down that mountain. If you get a look at Mount Sinai you will understand that Moses must have been in pretty good shape even though he was more than 80 years old. In verse 7 Moses takes the "book of the covenant" and read it in the hearing of the people and they said, 'All that the Lord hath said we will do and be obedient.' And Moses took the blood and sprinkled it on the people and said, 'Behold the blood of the covenant which the Lord hath made with you concerning all these words.' Then went up Moses [and this is the fifth time they go up] and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu and seventy of the elders of Israel, and they saw the God of Israel. And there was under his feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in its clearness. And upon the nobles of the children of Israel he laid not his hand; also they saw God, and did eat and drink." If God is invisible spirit, how then would you explain a passage such as this?

We come to three terms, one of which we use in connection with a passage such as this, and it's the term "theophany" -- a Greek word "theos" for God, "phaino" for showing forth or visible or seen. So we have places where God is actually seen -- what is called a theophany. Below the Isaiah 6 reference I've got, "Invisible spirit can be manifest in temporary visible form." In the Old Testament, on a number of occasions God did just exactly that -- He appeared in a visible form. For example, in Genesis 32 as Jacob was on his way back from his twenty-one years of exile, he heard that Esau was coming to meet him and he was afraid. He had left twenty-one years before that because Esau said, "If I ever get my hands on that guy I'll kill him." So Jacob that night decided that what he would do was to put behind those whom he loved, his wives and his children, and wait for Esau. That night someone wrestled with him -- all night -- and Jacob was winning until that fellow touched Jacob on the thigh and put it out of joint.

I studied wrestling when I was a teen-ager. I sent in for some correspondence courses. My folks didn't know about it at first, and I only had a little bit of money. As soon as my money ran out and I asked them for some they didn't give me any. But I learned enough to

know that if you had your thigh out of joint you weren't very good at wrestling. That's right, not very good at anything -- that's a good thought, too.

So Jacob was helpless, but he held on to the guy he was wrestling with. Jacob said, "I'll not let you go unless you bless me." Then God named him "a wrestler with God" -- "Israel." Then Jacob said, "I've seen God." There was God in human form, wrestling with Jacob. Something like Exodus 24 when God appeared to Moses and Aaron and Nadab and Abihu up there on the mountain.

Or if you turn to Joshua chapter 5, there you have Joshua having led the children of Israel across the Jordan River as the Lord parted those waters to allow them to go through. Now they were camped just outside of Jericho. Jericho is one of the important military sites that they were going to have to overcome if they were going to take the land. That night Joshua went out to look over the city, and when he did, the captain of the Lord's hosts appeared to him. If you read that chapter without the chapter divisions, you see that in the next verses the captain of the Lord's hosts is identified as the Lord. The Lord appeared in person to Joshua, even though God is invisible here.

It would be profitable for you to study what's called "the angel of the Lord." That is lies more in the doctrine of Christ than in the doctrine of God, and you need some translation besides the King James version -- and I don't want you to misunderstand me -- but there is a difference between "the" angel of the Lord and "an" angel of the Lord. There are many angels of the Lord, but there's only one "the" angel of the Lord, and that is the preincarnate Christ. He appears in various places throughout the Old Testament.

I think that we can show that these appearances of God in the Old Testament, where they saw the God of Israel and they ate and they drank, were appearances of the Lord Jesus Christ in a body, a temporary one to be sure until Mary gave Him a permanent one. But they were appearances of God in physical form, a theophany.

Q. Does theophany always mean a bodily appearance?

A. I understand it that way -- yes. This is "theos" -- God appearing. In John 1:32 we have the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove -- that's a bodily appearance. In my studies, I understand that a theophany is a bodily appearance of one kind or another.

So, part of the time at least, when God is seen, it is a theophany.

Next I have Isaiah chapter 6:1: "In the year that King Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphim. Each one had six wings; with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he did fly. And one cried unto another and said, 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory.'"

You notice in verse 1 that Isaiah said, "In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord." Sometimes when God is seen, the invisible God, He is seen in vision. That, of course, is something else than His appearance in bodily form.

Turn to Daniel for an illustration of that -- chapter 7:1: "In the first year of Belshazzar, king of Babylon, Daniel had a dream and visions of his head upon his bed." Notice a part of what he saw in verse 9: "I beheld till thrones were placed and the Ancient of days did sit whose garment was white as snow." There you have the "Ancient of days" -- Daniel saw the "Ancient of days". In verse 13: "I saw in the night visions and behold one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him." The "Ancient of days" and the "Son of man." Here in vision you have Daniel seeing God the Father, the "Ancient of days," and God the Son, the "Son of man" -- a temporary manifestation of that particular kind, in vision.

There are a number of places where that takes place: Revelation chapters 4 and 5 where John is caught up, apparently in vision, and there he sees the throne, he sees one seated on the throne with a hand and a scroll in it, and the Son of man, the Lamb, comes and takes that out of his hand and begins to open the scroll and the judgments go forth.

You'll notice how careful these descriptions are -- there is no full-length description of any kind, just the suggestion that there was seen this "Ancient of days" and the "Son of man" or the "one seated on the throne" and the Lamb coming to take the scroll. Visions -- another way in which the invisible God sometimes appeared in Scripture.

Q. Does it happen today?

A. I would be very careful about saying such a thing happens today. We're talking, when we read the biblical revelations, of things that were revealed before the Bible was complete. The Bible now is the rule and guide of our faith and conduct. I do not say that it might not take place, but I'm uneasy with all these people who are having all these revelations. It is best to stay by the Word of God. It is not that God could not, but He is not in the habit now of doing that again and again.

C. Hebrews chapter 1: "In many ways in times past, but now in His Son," and of course the Word.

The question in 3 was, "Since God is invisible, how do we explain passages such as Exodus 24" -- that is theophany; Isaiah 6 or Daniel 7 -- in vision. Then "invisible spirit can be manifest in temporary visible form -- John 1 -- that's in connection with the Holy Spirit descending on Christ in the form of a dove.

We make a mistake if we say that God never appears in a form or that He always does.

Question 4. Why does the Bible speak of God's hand, arm, eye, wings, nose, mouth, etc.? In Nehemiah there is a reference concerning God's hands; in Deuteronomy 33:27, "underneath are the everlasting arms"; Zechariah 4 tells about the eye of the Lord running to and fro; and there are quite a number of other passages. If God does not have a human form, then why speak about His hand, His arm, His eye, and so on?

We come to a third term -- a rather long one -- "anthropomorphism." "Anthropos" is a Greek word for man; "morphe" is the terminology for form or seeming, or appearing. It simply means that there are terms we are familiar with as human beings which are used to describe God in order to tell us what He is doing. As children, when we would hear a cat purr we'd say, "His motor is running." A cat doesn't have any motor, it isn't running -- I don't know how he does that but I like to hear it. That's a kind of anthropomorphic expression -- we're attributing to the cat something he doesn't have because it sounds like something which he is doing. God is watching us in spirit -- how are you going to say that in terms that we can easily understand except "His eye is upon us," or "His eye is on the sparrow"? Or He sustains us. What a wonderful expression, "underneath are the everlasting arms." Therefore, the Scripture takes terms with which we are familiar to describe what God is doing even though He does not have those bodily parts or forms.

God appears in assumed form to teach something -- when He appears on a throne in the sense of a vision or a theophany, He teaches that He is the ruler of the universe -- or something of that particular kind. God must use expressions we understand to explain to us some of His actions or characteristics.

It indicates the degree of the power He uses in doing certain things. It is interesting, when Moses returned from Mount Sinai, you remember he was angry and broke the clay tablets and had to go back up and rewrite the commandments, it says that the stones were written by the "finger of God." Or "He spoke and the worlds were created; He commanded and they stood fast." Imagine nothing in existence except God eternally and He speaks into existence all this universe. No wonder the sons of God shouted for joy. All He had to do was speak, but you know He had to bare His mighty arm to save you and me, in fact it was both of them. One of the hardest things He ever did was to take a sinner and declare him righteous. So sometimes these terms are used to describe the amount of effort He put forward to do some things, and therefore the anthropomorphic expressions help us to understand a little bit of that.

Q. Re immersion in blood, covering us with His blood, which seems to be offensive.

A. You'll never find anything in Scripture that is immersed, covered with blood. Some of our songs indicate that -- I don't like those songs in particular. Anywhere in the Scripture where blood is applied it is a little bit of a sprinkling. Of course the liberal has gone the other way

and eliminated the blood entirely, and that we don't want to do. We need an application of what the blood stands for, but never in the Scripture is anything immersed in blood. The closest you come to it is what the leper had to do when he was cleansed. He was to take running water and put in it a few drops of blood and then put a dove into that and send it up in the air -- free -- even as the leper is cleansed. But in other places it is a matter of sprinkling. As the high priest made his way through the tabernacle on the Day of Atonement he sprinkled a little here and there. When he appeared before the ark he sprinkled it seven times, on the mercy seat and then on the ground -- that's all. Anything about the blood in the Old Testament looked forward to the death of Christ on the cross.

C&A Don't separate the blood from the work of Christ on our behalf. But even there, it isn't the matter of being immersed in or covered by blood. We have a song: "There is a fountain filled with blood drawn from Immanuel's veins; And sinners plunged beneath that flood lose all their guilty stains." You're going to misunderstand me, but I'm saying there is no fountain filled with blood into which we are plunged -- there is blood by which we lose all our guilty stains. One author wrote a different stanza to that song but it never became very popular, but I don't have that with me. I believe in the blood of Christ, that it is needed for our salvation -- there's no question about that. Be Berean -- search the Scriptures to see whether "these things be so."

The intermediate state, the resurrected body. Have folks been raised from the dead in the Old Testament? There were some. Were there folks raised from the dead in the Gospels? There were some. All before the time Christ came forth from the dead. But if you chart those -- for instance, Lazarus in John chapter 11, into the intermediate state, back into life again, and sometime later he did what? Died again. That's true of all those who were raised from the dead. But when you chart Christ's resurrection, you have Christ in life, into the intermediate state, and right on out into the resurrection body. He's the firstborn from the dead in the sense of coming out with the resurrection body. So you need to use all the terms together. Firstborn of all creation -- the Creator. "By Him all things were made, and without Him was not anything made that was made," John 1. Firstborn from the dead -- the first one who came out with the resurrection body, and this is why when Christ died on the cross the graves were opened at the moment of His death in the area of Calvary (you remember that in Matthew 27?), but don't stop there, read the next verse, "And they came out of the graves AFTER His resurrection." That is one of the reasons I believe they had resurrected bodies, and when He ascended He took them with Him.

Let me read a couple of verses about God, and then we'll have a word of prayer. I'm beginning in the middle of a chapter -- I just want you to hear some things about God that you already know.

Job 26:7 "He [God] stretcheth out the north over the empty place, and hangeth the earth upon nothing. He bindeth up the waters in his thick clouds; and the cloud is not torn under them. He holdeth back the face of his throne and spreadeth his cloud upon it. He [that is, God] hath compassed the waters with a boundary, until the day and night come to an end. The pillars of heaven tremble and are astonished at his reproof. He divideth the sea with his power, and by his understanding he smiteth through the proud. By his spirit he hath granished the heavens [the Holy Spirit is the divine artist in nature]; his hand hath formed the crooked serpent. Lo, these are [all this creation] are a part of his ways; but how little a portion is heard of him? but the thunder of his power, who can understand?"

Now we are down to the unity of God. There is but one infinite God whose nature is one. We'll discuss the trinity a little later on, so don't run ahead of me as far as your questions are concerned. We're talking about having just one God whose nature is one. Isaiah 45:5: "I am the Lord and there is no other. There is no God beside me." That's God's word concerning Himself. That means this excludes all other gods. "There's none beside me."

There are other beings or objects that are called gods -- I Corinthians 8:1: "Now as touching things offered unto idols we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffeth up but love edifieth. And if any man think that he knoweth anything he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know. But if any man love God the same is known of him. As concerning therefore the eating of those things which are offered in sacrifice unto idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world and there is no other God but one." Those of you who have visited Corinth, you remember you walk down through the valley and look up at the high place where they used to worship their gods and where sacrifices were made to those gods. Later the meat was brought down into the valley where the people lived and was sold in the market place. The Corinthians who became Christians said, "Well, now what if we buy some of this meat and eat it?" Paul is talking about that possibility and about those things called gods.

Verse 5: "For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth (as there are gods many and lords many), but to us there is but one God, the Father of all, . . . and we in him, and one Lord Jesus Christ by whom are all things and we by him." I'm using the term Paul used in verse 5 "though there be that are called gods." God says, "I'm the only God there is, but there are other things that are called gods." If we were to study missions, you go into certain parts of the world and they worship a thing called dynamism, probably the lowest form of anything that a person can worship, that is, all nature is filled with sort of a dynamic influence. They're afraid of it and they worship they know not what -- it's to them a god but it really isn't God. Then there is animism -- sort of personal spirits. They may take abode up in a tree or in a bush or in a rock or something and people bow down and worship them as their god or their gods. But they aren't God at all. There is also fetishism, which is a rabbit's foot, a lucky charm, a coin, or a gold tooth that someone pulled out, or something of this sort -- something that has something

attached to it. They used to say a rabbit's foot would bring you good luck -- that was a fetish -- some people use that sort of thing. I'm not completely up on sports, though I like to follow some of it, but I find that many of the athletes are very superstitious and they have certain things they depend upon for good luck in the game. Those really are not gods even though they depend upon them for winning. Then there is idolatry in which there's a carved image of some kind, usually made by man. People believe that idol is something that will be of help to them and they worship that. Isaiah rather jokes about them in a serious sort of way; Paul is pointing out that they are nothing. In fact, one of the Hebrew words in the Old Testament is "a nothing." But there are those who worship idols. I fear for some of our so-called Christian worship, that it may be more connected with idols than it is with the reality -- we've got to be careful about that.

Then polytheism -- many gods. In India I believe the Hindus have some 300 million gods. I don't know how you'd get around to worshiping them all -- I guess they have some they like better than others. Then dualism, also in the Far East, Zoroastrianism. I don't know whether they make them any more or not, but there used to be a light bulb called the Mazda light bulb -- that's the god of light out of Zoroastrianism. And there is the god of darkness -- and they are in eternal conflict. Gods they worshiped. And then pantheism. Our friends who are in Christian Science or in Unity are actually in pantheism -- all is God, God is all. They confuse God who made all things with the all things that He made. They say there is no such thing as sin because God is everything; God is love; you're not sick, you just think you're sick, because God is love and God is all and God doesn't get sick and therefore you can't be sick. Well, they're sick when they think that, and I'm trying to speak carefully with regard to that. You've got to separate what God created from God Himself. So, there are many things that are called gods, but the Scripture says there's only one God, and that is the Lord above.

Mark 12:29: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one." This defines the nature of God -- He is one God, a unity. That's a quotation from Deuteronomy 6:4, and we'll look at that more in detail later on in connection with the Jewish misunderstanding of the trinity. At this point we're saying there is one infinite God whose nature is one.

There are some benefits to that. The Scripture therefore can say, "Love the Lord with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind." You've only got one to love, so give Him all the love you've got. I'm glad there is only one God. The speed of light is the same today as it was yesterday, as it was a thousand years ago. He rules the universe and His laws are constant. Therefore, there is no clash. And so, from a very practical way -- because I swallowed, the laws of gravity took my pancake to where it should have been this morning. We have one God. Some other god may have said, "That isn't the way it should go," and it could have gone to my head. So there are benefits to having one God.

The triunity, or trinity. That's term is not found in Scripture but the idea is there. We're getting into an area where almost any statement made could possibly be made into an error because we're dealing with something that we have nothing to compare it to. But notice, God exists in three distinct persons who are one essence, or entity, or being, or substance.

God's absolute uniqueness. In connection with this study, to me Isaiah 46:9 is very important: "Remember the former things of old. I am God; there is none else. I am God, and there is none like Me." "I am God, and there is none like Me." Since God is the only one of His kind, we have no one or nothing with which or with whom He may be compared. Our only source of information is the Bible. You'll probably be asking some questions and I'll be coming back to that statement. We have nothing with which to fully, one hundred percent compare or explain God. Later on there will be some illustrations that may help some, but only in certain areas. There's nothing like God, and therefore nothing with which to compare Him.

For example, if we had a microscope and we'd peer down that microscope and see a little amoeba, whatever that is. If it were possible for you to address it, you'd say to that little amoeba, "Amoeba, do you understand how a caterpillar can shed its fur coat and become a butterfly and fly off in the evening breeze?" That amoeba would think for a moment, and sit down and scratch his head, and say, "You've got me -- I can't understand that. It's beyond me." Then we'd say to the caterpillar, "Caterpillar, do you know how a dog knows enough to take the bone he's not hungry for and buries it, then some time later when he's hungry and the boss doesn't feed him on time, he goes out there and digs it up and eats it?" That cater-pillar would think about it for a moment or two, then scratch his head and say, "You've got me, I just don't understand that. It's in a realm above me." Then if you would say to Queenie, "Queenie, do you understand how your boss can work and earn a little money, put a little money aside for a vacation he plans to take a year from now -- put it into the bank to earn a little interest -- then when the time for vacation comes he knows where he wants to go, and goes to the bank and draws it out and goes on that vacation. Queenie would think about it, then sit down and scratch her side, and she'll say, "You've got me -- I just can't understand that." Then you'll say to Queenie's boss, "Sir, do you understand all about God?" It doesn't take Queenie's boss long to say, "You've got me -- I don't understand all about Him because there's nothing like Him. If the amoeba can't understand about the caterpillar, and the caterpillar can't understand about the dog, and the dog can't understand about man, as we move up in the realm of life; then when we move from the realm of the finite to the infinite, these finite persons are not going to understand all about the infinite, because there's nothing like Him. Please remember that as we go into our study of the trinity.

The New Testament doctrine is based on the Old Testament teaching of God's unity -- Mark 12:28 and 29; our Lord quotes Deuteronomy 6:4; and our discussion of that comes later. But this is the point I'm trying to make here: we're not moving away from Old Testament

teaching. We have a little more in the New Testament to help us to understand it, but it is still part of the Word of God. James 2:19: "You believe that God is one, you do well."

Yet in the New Testament there are three separate persons who appear, each one recognized as God. The Father is called God (175 times in the four Gospels and 45 times in Paul's epistles) -- two references are John 6:27 and Romans 1:7 -- the Father is called God. Jesus Christ is called God -- Hebrews 1:8, even the Father calls the Son God -- that's a pretty good testimony. Then John 1:1 and John 20:28. We'll look at those a little more in detail next week. But Christ is called God. The Holy Spirit is called God. Some feel that the Holy Spirit is just an influence. That's not true. Personal pronouns are used of the Holy Spirit, always in the masculine gender. The word "Spirit" of course is neuter along with some relative pronouns in connection with Him, but the sense is in the masculine, and the Holy Spirit has personal pronouns used of Him, and He is associated with persons in such a way as to indicate personality. There are other reasons as well.

Let's look at Acts 5:3,4, and we'll cover the Hebrews 1 and John 1 next time. Acts 5:3,4 -- probably the clearest passage, a familiar one to most of you already. This has to do with the so-called communism of the early Church. I'll read just a verse or two in chapter 4 because I think there's a misunderstanding on this. Acts 4:34: "Neither was there any among them that lacked. For as many as were possessors of land [not "sold" but "were selling"] and brought the prices of the things that were sold." In other words, they didn't just sell everything and turn the money over, but as the need arose they were selling. They weren't turning everything over completely at any one time, but as the need arose they were selling. Then in verse 36: "And Joseph by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas"; verse 37: "having sold it and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet, but a certain man named Ananias with Sapphira, his wife, sold a possession and kept back part of the price, his wife also knowing of it, and brought a certain part and laid it at the apostles' feet. But Peter said, 'Ananias, why has Satan filled thine heart to lie to [notice to whom he lied] the Holy Spirit and to keep back part of the price of the land. While it remained was it not thine own? [In other words, you could keep it if you wanted to.] After it was sold was it not in your own power? [He could still keep it.] Why hast thou conceived this in thy heart? Thou hast not lied unto men but unto God.' Do you see the Holy Spirit as God? He lied to the Holy Spirit. He lied to God. There are other passages which substantiate the fact that the Holy Spirit is God, but I think this is one of the clearest ones.

It's interesting, the people go into the land under Joshua and the first sin is judged with death. The first sin in the Church is judged with death. It's a good thing the Lord doesn't judge us now that way or we'd probably all drop dead. Here was a serious thing, an authority I personally believe given to the early apostles, not given to us, in which judgment was brought when they lied to God, lying to the Holy Spirit.

The Father is called God; Christ is called God; the Holy Spirit is called God.

Q. The formulation of the trinity came through the Church fathers. About when was that timewise? I know that's a hard question offhand to answer.

A. Some of the first statements as far as I know that were really clear came with the Council of Nicea, around 325.

Q. Not before that?

A. There were statements before that, and of course there was argument. When Constantine became emperor he called a council to settle some of these problems and they wrestled with quite a number of them and included some of the solutions in the Nicene Creed. The revelation of the trinity begins in the Old Testament, but you can't see it very clearly until we come to the New Testament, and then we go back and see it is there. The New Testament itself was not completely written until around 100 A.D. Then there was a gathering process before it all came together, which took quite some period of time. It was on the basis of that that the early Church began to formulate some of its doctrines, to be crystalized, at least in my recollection, at the time of the Council of Nicea. I think that is correct.

C&A The Church was using the doctrine of the trinity long before the Council of Nicea; for instance, Paul's benediction naming the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. So they were using it even though there was no formal statement issued by the Church as such until later. Even with Paul's other writings, and of course Christ's statement in Matthew 28, baptizing in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Comments re statements in the Bible

The very moment someone takes part of the statements of the Bible and overemphasizes that you get into trouble. For example, there are those who are not trinitarians but they're tri-theists, that is, they hold to three gods. They forget the statement that God is one. Then there are those who are Jesus only and they rule out the other parts of the trinity. We've got to watch our checks and balances, so check with us as we go along.

Re Jesus-only people -- Christ is the image of the invisible God -- Col. 1:15. John 1, He is the one who has declared, or exegeted, the Father. A lot of what we know about God comes from what we know about Christ. "He that has seen Me has seen the Father."

"The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; the statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart." Psalm 19:7,8a

through this wonderful Book and there find what Thou hast re-vealed concerning Thyself. We pray that we come this morning with prepared hearts, which only the Holy Spirit can do as we yield unto Thee. And then teach us as we think together. We pray again for clarity of thought and for willingness to discuss that we might come to a better understanding of our great God and of our Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen

Two matters before we get on with the lesson.

A question was asked concerning the history of the Trinity in the early Church. There is an abundance of testimony. I jotted down just a couple matters which lead up to the Nicene Creed. One person in the class last week pointed out very well that the early Church simply used the trinitarian formula from the beginning -- Matthew 28, the baptismal formula, "in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit"; the Apostle Paul in closing II Corinthians uses what we call the apostolic benediction, and there again the three persons of the Godhead are mentioned, so it is true that it was a part of the early Church from the very beginning.

Books variously thought to have been written probably some time between 50 and 60 A.D., just past the middle of the first century of the Christian Church, already had the trinity formulated and put into writing by the Holy Spirit. Then there's a book called the "Didache," which is the Greek word for "teaching," -- it is called also the "Teaching of the Twelve Apostles." By whom it was written we don't know for sure, nor the date exactly, though it has been suggested that it was written around 120 A.D., and it's interesting to read. Though it is not Scripture, it contains much by tradition that was held by the early Church and it discusses various matters concerning the keeping of the communion service, and there is one little section concerning baptism. While we will not get into the question of baptism this morning, yet in connection with the baptism it points out the use of the Trinitarian formula. So here is writing outside the Scriptures which uses the Trinitarian formula.

Then the Apostles' Creed which many of us repeat in a worship service has that included, and that stretches all the way down to the time of the Nicene Council. Theophilus of Antioch in 170 is the first man to have used the word "trinity" in his writings. The word "trinity" is not in the Scripture, but the idea is there and the word was coined to express that idea. Athenagoras, around 180 A.D. and then down to the Nicene Council in 325 A.D. where it is definitely put into a statement as a creed for the Church. There is much more, but I thought it was an interesting question and am glad it was asked, because there is a whole lot more in Church history that shows the use of the trinitarian formula than I had thought.

Then the other question that was asked, for I quoted Mark 12:28,29 in which I quoted "Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one." The question was asked from what translation was I quoting. I confess I neglected to mark in all of these notes the translation I was using, but you can be assured that if I have a quotation it is

either from the King James Version or the New Schofield, which is the adjusted King James, or the New King James Bible or sometimes the New American Standard Bible. Those are the only three that I think even of our modern translations stay pretty close to the literal wording of the Scriptures. And it so happens that was from the New King James Bible.

I have a Hebrew translation of the New Testament used by those who are attempting to reach Jews for Christ but want to put into their hands the Hebrew Bible. I notice that in Mark 12:28,29 they quote very literally in Hebrew Deuteronomy 6:4, "Hear O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord," as our King James reads, ends in Hebrew by "Adonai echod," that is, "Adonai" - "Lord," "echod" - "one". Then in the Greek Bible, the Greek ends with "theos" - "God," "eis" - "one," and then the verb "to be." So it can be translated either way, "is one Lord" or "the Lord is one." I think it comes out the same in any particular case.

Under the unity or trinity of God we noted, "I am God and there is none like Me." I illustrated the fact that in the realm of life the realm below does not understand the realm above -- you remember the amoeba, the caterpillar, the dog, the man, and God. The higher we move there are always things in the realm above that the realm below does not understand, so there's a lot about God that we cannot fully understand. But, the teaching is based on the Old Testament teaching of the unity of God -- we have only one God.

Yet in the New Testament three distinct persons appear, each one recognized as God. We looked at God the Father. There are some 175 times in the Gospels where God the Father is named God -- we have no problem there. Then in Acts 5:3,4, in connection with the Holy Spirit -- the Holy Spirit is called God. And there are other pass-ages which show the deity of the Holy Spirit.

Now we go to Jesus Christ as God -- Hebrews 1:8, John 1:1, and John 20:28. There are quite a few other passages but I think these are key ones.

Let me deal with John 1:1. Your Bible reads, "In the beginning was the Word, the Word was with God, and the Word was God." A very clear statement. Verse 14, "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us," speaking about Christ. So that verse 1 is calling Christ God. I'm not sure they'll let them do it in the Village, but someone might come to your door and say, "That's the wrong translation of John 1:1." They will say that it should read, "and the Word was a God," instead of "the Word was God." If they have a particular Jehovah's Witness translation with them they will turn to that passage, put their finger on John 1:1 and say, "See?" Or some of their Bibles in the back have an extended discussion of this verse in which they attempt to show from the Greet that that is the correct translation. However, that is not true.

Let me quote you from Walter Martin's Bible on Cults in which he says "No recognized translation in the history of Greek exegesis has

ever sanctioned such a grammatical travesty on this verse as the Watch-tower translation." If you will check with anyone who understands his Greek grammar and the way that verse is constructed, you find that the definite article goes with the subject, then there's the verb "to be," and then comes this word "God" which is a predicate nominative, if you want to call it that, and therefore it is "God" not "a God." All you have to do is take their Bible and go to verse 18 and you will find that they translate the word "God" and not "a God," so they don't even follow their own principles of translation.

Q. I have one of Berry's Greek interlinear translation, and on that last phrase Berry has it "God was the Word."

A. Yes, it can be translated that way. He is translating it in the order in which the Greek appears, and it's "God," which is the Greek word "Theos." Then you have "the Word" - (the definite article is there, "ho Logos" - "the Word." Berry is translating it in this order -- "God was the Word."

Q. Can you write out "And the Word was with God"?

A. There you have "the Word was pros ton Theon."

Q. The spelling in the Greek is not the same as the one you have in the third [i.e., last] phrase.

A. Probably what you're thinking about, you have this letter "s" instead of this one "n". That's because this "Theos" is in the nominative case, this "Theon" is in the accusative case, and the endings change on the word.

Q. So that really the order appears "God the Word," in the nominative case [i.e., in the last phrase].

A. Yes, but when you have the verb "to be" you have the nominative case in the subject as well as in the predicate.

Q. In the last phrase you don't have the verb "to be."

A. Yes, you do -- I abbreviated the phrase, but "'en' was the Word." It can be translated "God was the Word" -- that would be the Greek order. The definite article, "ho" is the reason most translations put it into the subject, "the Word was God," but it can be done either way.

Q. In connection with that about "the Word" how would you explain Psalm 138:2, the last part. It says, "for thou has magnified thy word above all thy name."

A. There it is talking about the Scripture itself -- that's the word of God. If I don't keep my word my name doesn't mean much. That's the point there. God keeps His word and therefore His name means quite a bit. His word is important -- that makes His name valuable. I don't think it is talking about Christ as the Word, but about the word of God itself.

So John 1:1 -- I'm concerned that Jehovah's Witnesses and others will come and try to throw a curve in connection with this. That just cannot be. What we call the Father I guess they do also. He is God. But some time later He created Christ, so Christ is not eternal, so He is a God. Then the Holy Spirit comes in later yet, if they want to talk about that. So they take away the deity of Christ when you do that. In Isaiah 43:10 -- incidentally, this is interesting, because Isaiah 43:10 is one verse the Jehovah's Witnesses use, "Ye are my witnesses." Notice what it says in the last part of the verse: "saith the Lord and my servant whom I have chosen, that ye may know and believe me and understand that I am he, before me [that is, "before me, God"] there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me." In other words, Christ can't be a later God. God says, "There was no God created before me, none created after me." So even in the verse they use as Jehovah's Witnesses their translation of John 1:1 is entirely wrong.

As we discussed last week, and I hope this isn't too technical, they use for example the "firstborn." They say Christ is the first-born of all creation, He's the first one God created. As we pointed out last week, "firstborn" has an entirely different meaning.

John 20:28. Thomas -- I like that fellow. Every time you check him in the Scripture, and he isn't there very often, he is checking upon things. He doesn't just believe something because someone tells him. I found that when I first accepted Christ as my Saviour I wanted to know. And Thomas is one of those guys. Thomas was a severe, orthodox Jew. He believed in the one God of the Old Testament. When Christ rose from the dead and appeared to the disciples on that first day Thomas was not there. So the disciples told Thomas Christ was risen from the dead. Thomas says, "Now, wait a minute. Unless I see those prints and put my hand in His side I will not believe." He was doing what Peter says in his epistle, being able to "give a reason for the hope that lies within you." A week later the disciples were together and Thomas was with them. Christ appeared in their midst. He addressed Thomas and said, "Thomas, come on." He did not rebuke him, but He said, "reach forth your hand and put it into my side, and be not faithless but believing." And Thomas answered, "My Lord and my God." The orthodox Jew of the Old Testament, who would not believe unless it was proven to him, said Christ was God.

When you talk to some of these people, they say that he was just swearing -- he was so surprised that he said, "Oh, my Lord and my God." But read the next verse where Christ commands Thomas, "Blessed art thou." He wasn't swearing -- he was confessing that Christ was God. So we have testimony, not only in John 1 but also in John 20 that Christ is God.

GOD IS OMNIPOTENT

by Willis E. Bishop
January 15, 1985

"This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord. And when I saw it, I fell upon my face." Ezekiel 1:28.

Prayer: Our Heavenly Father, as we come to Thee this morning we recognize how great You really are; how awesome in Your holiness; how tremendous in your power; how all-knowing. And yet You are mindful of us and Your grace is extended toward us in a way which we scarcely appreciate. And so we come with Ezekiel, on our face before Thee praying that we may have grateful hearts and understanding minds as we turn to Thy word. In Jesus' precious name. Amen.

Last week we looked at two of God's characteristics: His omniscience and His omnipresence. And this week we will look at the omnipotence of God. The "omni" in these three characteristics of God is "all" -- "omniscient" means all-knowing; "omnipresent," which we shall look at today, means all or everywhere present; and "omnipotent" means all-powerful.

God is omnipotent. God is able to do all things that He wills to do and which are consistent with His own nature and character. In other words, omnipotence does not involve absurdity or contradiction as far as His nature and character are concerned, but beyond that, in any way that He pleases, at any time that He pleases, any thing that He pleases to have done He will do in the right time, in the right way, doing it as a loving, righteous God, and therefore He is omnipotent. A synonym for "omnipotent" is "almighty," used fifty-six times in the King James Bible, and never of anyone but God.

A couple of biblical illustrations: Genesis 17:1, "I am God Almighty" -- in Hebrew "El Shaddai". In Genesis 17 God appears to Abraham, who is then ninety-nine years old, and Sarah, whose womb had apparently always been barren, and He says to them that they will have a son. When they seem to question it, God asks, "Is there anything too hard for the Lord?" And of course the answer is, "No, there is not."

Matthew 19:26: "With God all things are possible." That's the passage in which the rich young ruler came to Jesus and he turns away sorrowfully, though he had lived apparently a good moral life. The disciples are amazed and they say, "If he can't be saved who can be?" and the Lord answers, "With God all things are possible. He can save even a fellow like that if he wants to be saved."

We have other biblical illustrations. When the angel appears to Mary to announce that by virgin birth she will become the mother of the Messiah, she asks, "How will this be seeing I know not a man?" The angel simply replies, "With God all things are possible."

I like Paul's defense in Acts chapter 26 where he says, "Why do you think it's a thing impossible that God should raise the dead?" "With God all things are possible."

Observation: God is never exhausted by the exercise of His power. We hear folks quote a verse quite a bit in connection with that, Isaiah 40:31, "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint." In that context, the reason that is true is that we find in verse 28 of Isaiah 40: "The creator of the ends of the earth fainteth not, neither is weary."

Someone may raise the question, "What about the fact that God rested from His work of creation in the early chapters of Genesis?" The Hebrew word might be used for "rest," but it is the word for "ceasing" in that sense -- "shabbat." God didn't stop because He was tired; He stopped because He was finished. Therefore, even the creation was not difficult for God. The Scripture says "He spoke and the worlds were created; He commanded and they stood fast."

I noticed just in the last week or two scientists claim they're finding another universe out there that's being formed in the way they think our universe was formed. I can say to you that, at least from my point of view from the Bible, they are on the wrong track. They are trying to get another simply "big bang" out of which our universe appeared. That still doesn't account for the creation of matter to begin with. That was simple for God, just to speak and the worlds were created. Perhaps I've said this in class before, but a harder thing that He did was to die on the cross for our sins. He spoke and the worlds were created. He had to stretch out His arms to lift us up and grant us salvation.

What about questions such as: (1) Wasn't God able to create a world in which there would be no sin? The answer of course is "yes, He could have." He could have created a race of automatons, without free will. Instead, He created people in His image, with free will. In the automobile industry they're using robots. You simply push a button and the robot does what it's supposed to do without thinking. They claim they can be made to think, but they can make them to think only what is put into them to make them think with. And God could have made us just like that. He could have says, "Well, on Tuesday morning at ten minutes after nine I want some worship," and He would push His button, and all of us here, simply because we were automatic, bow down and worship Him. He could have made a world like that. But He chose not to do that. The very moment He gave to the human being that He created free will, and we're made in the image and likeness of God whose will is free, then, if I may say it this way, He took the chance that we might use that free will contrary to His will, and therefore that's the way sin came into the universe. I would say He has done it in a much better way.

C.&A. She's pointing out that the rehabilitation program of today is based, at least in great part, upon the free will of the individual to choose to be rehabilitated. I have in

my acquaintance a man who at one time was quite a drunkard. He still does not know the Lord, but one day he simply decided, "I've had my last drink," and he quit. He did that by his own free will. I also know from experience in rescue missions that a drunkard can come to that altar, bow before the Lord, and get up and never touch another drop again.

I remember one fellow who said, "Praise the Lord. I knew I had a new heart, but I didn't know He gave me a new stomach."

Question No. 2: Doesn't God have the power to end poverty, suffering and death? He has provided man with the ability to overcome poverty, but man hasn't done it. We're seeing a great emphasis today on Ethiopia and the poverty there. We shouldn't get into political discussions this morning, but there are several reasons for that poverty there.

I get disturbed sometimes when they pay men not to grow grain and not to provide milk, and so on. We're living in a strange world. But God has indeed provided the ability to overcome poverty if we would do it. Jesus also said that we would always have the poor with us. Then of suffering -- Christ will some day end suffering by putting down all unrighteousness, and I'm sure you pray for that sometimes as I do. You think of the world and its condition and ask, "Lord, how long?" One of these days He will take care of that. And then Christ has given us victory over death. So that has not limited God's omnipotence.

Q. From the return to the Millennium?

A. Yes, I am thinking of the Millennium, and beyond of course.

Q. At the end of the Millennium when Satan is released again, then it says there will be those that follow Satan. Wouldn't that indicate that Christ hadn't put down all unrighteousness?

A. Those of you who are not premillennial can close your ears for a moment or two. I will repeat the question, which goes something like this: Are you speaking about the Millennium, that is, that thousand year rule of Christ here on the earth? My answer is: Yes, in part I am, but I'm thinking about also beyond. Let me speak now just about the Millennium.

When the Lord comes back at the end of the Tribulation period, then you find the account in the Gospels where He gathers all nations before Him and separates the sheep from the goats -- Matthew 25. At that point every unsaved person will be removed from the earth at that particular time, so that Christ begins the Millennial reign with only saved people. He then rules, during the Millennium, with a rod of iron. It's spoken of several places in the Scripture: in the Psalms; in the Revelation. Any outbreak of sin during the Millennial period is judged immediately. According to one of the Psalms they yield to the Lord feigned obedience. They keep the law

because they know what's going to happen if they don't. However, those saved people that begin the Millennium have children. Their children are born even as your children and mine are, and they have a sinful nature. Some will accept Christ and some will not, even during that reign of righteousness. But because of that immediate judgment upon sin they will yield feigned obedience.

At the end of the Millennium Satan is loosed for a little season, and those unsaved who live at that point can say, "This is our chance," and they rebel against the Lord. He brings judgment upon them and from there on you go into the Great White Throne and the eternity to come. In eternity of course there will be righteousness. (I think I'm talking about what you asked about.) So there is righteousness.

Once in a while you will see in the paper that someone found a pocketbook and is honest enough to return it with all the money. I wish there would be more stories like that. I sat listening to television news recently and it just made me sick. There was one murder, one rape, right after another for about ten minutes. Why don't they report some of the good things and give people the idea that there are good things to do?

Anyhow, during the Millennium, if you lose your pocketbook don't worry about it -- it will show up and everything will be there. It will be a reign of righteousness. But there is immediate judgment on those who do wrong, and therefore, there will be feigned obedience with rebellion at the end.

Q. Why couldn't the devil be put down in the first place?

A. I don't think we have the full answer to that in Scripture, but it is one of the sources of testing for you and for me. The book of Job, for example, is a tremendous illustration of that. Job got into all his troubles because God boasted on him. "Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none righteous as he is?" And Satan was turned loose on him, and that is one of the things that made Job say, "When I'm tried I'll come forth as pure gold." So the Lord is using Satan for a purpose that He doesn't fully reveal to us. We have to just depend on the Lord doing it the right way.

Then another question, and this has been asked rather frequently in classes: Can God make a rock so big He couldn't lift it? The point is, if He can't make a rock so big He couldn't lift it then He is not omnipotent. If He could make a rock so big He couldn't lift it He is not omnipotent. At least that's the intent of the question. Let me try to answer that.

Omnipotence implies the power of self-limitation. If He could make this rock, this would not be consistent with His omnipotence,

since He would no longer be omnipotent. Is that clear? As I have said above, He does only those things which are consistent with His nature and character. There are some things power can not do. So, He cannot make a rock so big that He cannot lift it because it would be contrary to His attribute of immipotence.

There are other things God cannot do: He cannot lie -- He cannot make an untruth to be true; He cannot make two plus two equal five. Some truth does not lie in the realm of power at all. Suppose it were possible for you to take two plus two and put it over an atom bomb and blow it to pieces. How many pieces would you have? I don't know. But it if were possible, with all that tremendous power, to blow two and two apart and then gather all those parts together again, all you'd have would be what? -- two plus two. You wouldn't have five. Power can't do everything, even in the realm of truth. And so He can't do that. He can't make the past to have never happened -- sometimes we wish that might be true. He cannot destroy Himself or else He wouldn't be eternal. He cannot make a power that would be greater than His power or else He would not be omnipotent.

C. When He lifts the Church in the Rapture He'll take the foundation of the Church along with it -- that's pretty big.

C. He sent the angel to remove the stone from the tomb.

A. That shows us the angels are really pretty powerful. Those rocks on the tombs are about a foot thick and six or seven feet tall and are rolled in a groove downward until they drop into a niche. That's why the women asked, "Who is going to roll away that stone?" Here are a couple of tons of rock, but an angel comes and leans against it and moves it away, but God gave him the strength to do that.

I have a quotation here from Charles Baker: "It is no impeachment of the perfection of the eye that it cannot see what is invisible, nor of the ear that it cannot hear what is not audible. So it is no imperfection in the power of God that it cannot do what cannot be done."

This attribute is an encouragement to those facing problems humanly impossible to solve. In Jeremiah chapter 32 the enemies had come into the land of Israel and were already at the gates of the city of Jerusalem. Jeremiah is told to buy a field which is already in the hands of the enemy to the north of Jerusalem. There would be no sense in doing that. But the Lord told him to do it, so he subscribes the deed, pays for it, and the field is his, but it is in the hands of the enemy. Then the chapter comes to a close with this lesson: even though that is in the hands of the enemy now it will one day be back in the hands of the people of Israel and that will be his family's property. In spite of the seeming difficulty at that point, Jeremiah had faith enough to pay for the field because God said that later on it would be back in the hands of Israel.

There are other attributes such as God is perfect, God is infinite, God is incomprehensible, God is holy, God is righteous, God is mercy, God is grace -- all of those are characteristics of God without which He would not be God. But I think we'll stop at this point with the Doctrine of God.

C. I don't know that I can express myself the way I should, but when you were talking about scientists finding another universe, it makes me recall that prior to the time of Christopher Columbus anyone who said that the earth was round was probably executed because of his beliefs. Now if there is another universe out there God certainly has been making it, and if we say there isn't maybe we're putting limitations on God because whatever is out there He has created it and we're just discovering it.

A. I'm glad you said that. If I said it the way he has understood it, this isn't what I meant. I'm not denying that they've found something out there. I believe they have. Not the universe, but the multiverse -- whatever universes there are altogether, those are in God's control. I'm not even questioning that they might find something forming out there. But, if you're familiar with the "big bang" theory of creation, that is, creation started simply with a big bang, that theory starts with material. The creation in the Bible starts with God making material. So evolutionists, at least in the articles that I have read, are working to eventually rule God out.

I'm simply saying that what they are finding does not rule out God nor the creation of material. I did not mean to say they were not finding something out there -- they probably are. In fact, when they boost some of these telescopes into circuit around the earth above our atmosphere they are apparently going to be able to see a whole lot more of what God has done than we could ever see from the Earth here.

Q. About who is going to convict people during the Millennium.

A. The Holy Spirit is going to convict people. Acts chapter 2 and the coming of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit was in the world before Acts chapter 2. In Acts chapter 2 the Holy Spirit came to form the Church. So this is an additional work of the Holy Spirit. When the Church is removed, the Holy Spirit is removed in the sense in which He has formed the Church. But He will remain here in the sense that He was here before the Church was formed.

In other words, there is more than one work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit was busy from the beginning. He added another work in forming the Church. In fact, the baptism of the Holy Spirit is not a charismatic experience (I Corinthians 12:13) -- it is putting us into one body which is called the Church. When the Church Age is ended and the Church is taken out, the

Holy Spirit ceases that work -- He no longer forms the Church or adds members to the Church, but He continues to work during the Millennium, even as He did before He began to form the Church.

Q. Are we supposed to get out of the world [unintelligible].

A. No. However, I think those worlds up there without human beings or without any intelligent creatures on them will come into God's use in the future, which is only intimated in the Scripture. Let me illustrate it this way.

I was born on a farm and helped my dad run the farm until I was about seven years old when we moved off. Suppose I had said to you, "My dad is a great farmer," (and he was) and you'd come to see my dad's farm. I would take you out behind the house and show you a little garden, and I'd say, "There's my dad's farm." You'd say, "I thought you said your dad was a great farmer. How about this 120 acres that surrounds us?" I'd say, "Oh, forget it -- this is my dad's farm." That really wasn't so -- my dad farmed that whole 120 acres.

God created this whole universe -- multiverse, if you want to use that term. While at the present time we may not know its full use, in days to come when we're with the Lord and we're down near the end, at least to the Bible story, we'll find that God is a good farmer, and all of that ties into His use in one way or another and in ways perhaps we cannot even conceive of at the present time.

Q. Are the new heaven and new earth.

A. The new heaven and new earth is a subject that would take a half hour to go through. But it is true that it is renewed and, therefore, becomes, I think, an important part of God's future program. We needn't worry. God's in control of all the universes they'll ever find. He's the creator of all those universes -- the Bible tells us that, and they will come into full use if they're not so now. We don't know -- they may be. But there are no human beings there -- Psalm 115 says He has put the human beings here on Earth.

Q. What was the difference between the works of the Holy Spirit before Pentecost and after?

A. If you take the whole Bible testimony concerning the Holy Spirit you'll find about twelve or fourteen different works that He performs. For example, the Holy Spirit leads and guides believers. He did that in the Old Testament as well as today. There is an infilling experience. That was an Old Testament experience as well as one today. He enlightens people in their understanding of Scripture. He did that in the Old Testament as well as today. He convicts men of sin -- "Take not Thy Holy Spirit from me," David prayed. He

convicted them in the Old Testament -- He convicts today. The one work which He is doing today which He did not do in the Old Testament is the work of Spirit baptism. It is never mentioned in the Old Testament. It's mentioned four times in the Gospels and always in the future tense. In the book of Acts it occurs in chapter 2, and when Peter speaks a little later on in the book of Acts he refers back to what had begun in Acts chapter 2. There were quite a number of works which He did in the Old Testament. He added one baptism and when that's done with the departure of the Church He continues with these other works as He had done before.

Prayer: Our Heavenly Father, we thank You again for these few moments that we've been able to spend together. We realize, Lord, that from the point where we live and we look into the future there are great things ahead. We tremble for the moral condition of the world and the fierce times which the Apostle Paul said would come upon us. And yet we rejoice in a great God, omnipotent, who is able to care for us in the trials, through the trials, and beyond them. We commit ourselves anew unto Thee today, asking that You'll find in us willing servants, to live for Thee, to witness for Thee, in our Saviour's precious name. Amen.

GOD IS OMNIPRESENT

by Willis E. Bishop
January 8, 1985

God is omnipresent. Definition: God is everywhere present in the universe at the same time.

An atheist wrote: "God is nowhere." His little daughter wrote: "God is now here." According to the record that Strong has in his Systematic Theology, that little statement by his daughter converted that man to Christ. And God is everywhere present at the same time.

The psalmist felt that somewhat in Psalm 139: "Whither shall I go from Thy spirit, or whither shall I flee from Thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven Thou art there. If I make my bed in sheol, behold Thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall Thy hand lead me and Thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, 'Surely the darkness shall cover me', even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from Thee, but the night shineth as the day. The darkness and the light are both alike unto Thee.' The psalmist recognized the presence of God everywhere.

Jeremiah wrote, "Do not I fill heaven and earth?' says the Lord." He is everywhere present.

Perhaps this might help you to understand the omnipresence of God. You remember awhile back we looked at Isaiah 49. We don't have anything like God -- there is nothing like Him -- and therefore we can't illustrate it perfectly. But that little circle that I put on the board: you think of God first, and then you put the universe in God. God is **everywhere** present. Paul said in Acts 17, "In Him we live and move and have our being." That circle doesn't explain it fully, but it does give us some idea. We don't have a universe and then take God and try to "smear" Him out [if I may use that term] and put Him into the whole of the universe. He is bigger than the universe He has created and "in Him we live and move and have our being."

You might say, for example, that my voice is everywhere present in this room; or that wherever you are sitting I am in your presence though you are not up here with me. There is something about "your presence" that makes puts everyone in this room in your presence. I don't know whether that sort of illustration helps or not. Although I cannot understand God fully, these illustrations help me to grasp the fact that He is everywhere present.

Although God is everywhere present, He is distinct from all created substances. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."

Recently we said a word about pantheism in which certain movements such as Unity and Christian Science confuse God's omnipresence with His creation. He is everywhere present but He is not what He has

created. "In the beginning God [separately] created the heavens and the earth." Therefore such movements as Unity and Christian Science are not correct; pantheism is not right at all, even though God is everywhere present.

If God is everywhere present, how can we explain statements such as "God dwells in heaven and comes down to earth"? We pray in the Lord's prayer, "Our Father who art in heaven." In Genesis 11, the account of the tower of Babel, God says, "Let us go down and see," and the Lord came down to see the city and what they were doing there. If He's everywhere present why was it necessary for Him to come down, or how can we say, "Our Father who art in heaven"? Let me give you a couple of answers.

Heaven is His "home," or may I say His headquarters from which He operates. Before we moved down here to Kissimmee we attended a church which had a pastor who had a very nice way of saying things. When someone had gone to be with the Lord, on Sunday he would announce to the congregation who it was and whatever services there might be, and he would speak of it as "passing from the Church Militant to the Church Triumphant." Or he would speak of it as "entering God's nearer presence." Heaven is God's home or the headquarters from which He operates, but He manifests Himself in special ways in places where He already is. Then sometimes the languages indicates that God gives special attention, and that's true when He comes down to see the city. "There's a city down there that needs my attention. I'm going to do something about it," and the Scripture indicates it in that way. I have no problem with His being everywhere present and yet dwelling in heaven. In fact, I'm glad He is there because that's where we're going some day.

The doctrine of prayer assumes omnipresence. Psalm 145:18: "The Lord is near to all who call upon Him." I suspect you, as well as I, have been in places where no one has been around, far away from anything else, and yet you've found real comfort in the fact that you could turn to the Lord in those circumstances and in those situations because He is everywhere present.

GOD IS OMNISCIENT

by Willis E. Bishop
January 8, 1985

God's knowledge includes all things past, present and future.

Definition: "Omni" is "all"; "scio" is "to know" -- so that is all-knowing.

God knows all things (I John 3:20); Psalm 147:5, "His understanding is infinite [or without limit]." In other words, He knows perfectly and completely what He will know when tomorrow becomes yesterday. How about that?

You and I watch a parade. We're standing on a street corner and the parade goes by. Around the corner comes another band and then comes a float, and so on. That's the way we see life. But God is up there, and He sees the whole parade at one time. He knows all things in that particular fashion.

On the back of a dollar bill there is a pyramid and over that is an eye. While I still don't know what that Latin says at the bottom, that eye represents the all-seeing God.

A sample list of some things He knows:

In the animal world, not one sparrow falls to the ground without your heavenly Father knowing it. In fact, when you put a couple of Scripture references together, several sparrows are worth something and a couple more are worth twice that much, but there's a fifth sparrow that doesn't seem to be worth anything. And yet God knows when that one falls to the ground.

In the world of the dead -- Sheol is naked before Him. Hell is not Satan's play house, it's God's prison house. It's in His control and it's naked before Him.

All the minute details of life. Matthew 10:30, the very hairs of your head are numbered. He knows the hearts of all and He notes the details of life.

We'll not take time to read Psalm 139:1-4, but the psalmist says, "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me."

This next one to me is amazing, and yet when you think of God it is true.

Events which would have taken place under certain circumstances. Matthew 11:21: "If the things which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon they would have repented in sackcloth and ashes."

I have abbreviated the verse, but if something had been done in that place that was done in you, they would have repented. God knew what would have taken place if something else had taken place. In other words, He has double knowledge. That's one of the reasons why I can trust the prophecies of the Bible, because God's knowledge is that perfect.

Isn't God too great to notice every little event in human life?

We lived for thirty-five years in Washington, D.C. We also had during all that time a President of the United States. I worked just about six blocks from him. Mrs. Bishop worked closer than that. And yet if either one of us had gone over to the White House, except for the place where the public is permitted, and tried to go into a certain office there called the "Oval," we would have been stopped. We might say, "Well, I'd like to talk to the President. I have a few opinions I'd like to have him know." At least the politest answer that would have been given would be, "I'm sorry, he's too busy." He has a lot more important things to do than to talk to the Bishops. And so we never did get to talk to him.

When we come to God, who is the Ruler of the universe, who has every detail under control, isn't He too big to notice the little events in human life? But then my answers.

This is based on a false notion of greatness -- finite or human greatness.

The fact that God can and does notice small things is a part of what makes Him so great.

You can be praying about one thing and I can be praying about another thing at the same time. He can handle both of those. Some believer in China is having some real difficulty and is praying at the same time. God can handle that. It is because He can handle all of those details that makes Him so great. What a consolation to those who trust Him, and I might say it also ought to be a warning to those who do not.

Prayer: Our Father, we acknowledge this morning how far You are above us, as heaven is above the earth, and yet You loved us so that You sent Your Son, not for just the whole world but for us. That you care for us as individuals and for every little need. You are mindful of where we go and what we do and of the love that's in our hearts even now for Thee. We pray in the quietness of this moment that we may tell You again we love You and we look for Your care through this day. In Jesus' precious name. Amen.

UNCHANGEABLENESS OF GOD

by Willis E. Bishop
January 8, 1985

God is unchangeable -- Malachi 3:6: "I am the Lord; I do not change." Psalm 33:11: "The council of the Lord stands forever." James 1:17: "The Father with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow (or in King James) the shadow that is cast by turning." God is unchangeable.

Definition: There is no change in God's nature or character.

That raises several questions. How can we explain passages where God is said to repent if He is unchangeable? For example, in I Samuel 15, after Saul had failed God, God said, "It repented me that I have set up Saul as king." Yet in that same passage it speaks about God "who will not lie nor repent." I suggest that in verses 10 and 11 God is dealing with man and in verses 28 and 29 He is dealing with His attitude toward sin. In a number of places it is said that God repents. In Genesis 6:6 it says that it repented Him that He had made man and decided to destroy him with the flood. It's true in Acts 17:30, "God commands all men everywhere to repent." You and I have a real reason for doing that.

I seriously question the salvation experience of a person that does not have in it repentance -- godly sorrow for sin and a genuine change of the mind. I'm a little bit exercised, maybe too much, over people today who are simply invited to come and make a commitment to Christ. I frankly don't think that will do it, unless perhaps there is in that commitment without being stated in so many words a genuine fact that we realize we are sinners before a holy God and due for His just punishment, and we're sorry for our sin, and therefore in coming to Christ for salvation we say "Lord, I'm sorry for my sin. I forsake it, and I accept the payment that the Saviour made on the cross." Then I think God does business with us.

But when you talk about God who is holy, and He has no sin to be repented of, and yet it's spoken of Him as repenting, it seems to raise a problem. But if we look at it in the light of that change of mind, then I think we can understand what the Scripture means by it.

So Observation No. 1 is: An unchangeable God must sometimes change His dealings with man in order to remain unchangeable in His attitude toward sin. I brief it by saying sometimes God changes in order to remain unchangeable.

In the sight of God, I characterize it simply as holiness. On the one hand we have sin, or evil. Let's take man and put him on the side of sin. He is not on the side of God, and God must judge that man. That is His attitude toward man. But when man comes to Christ and has his sin forgiven, God deals with him in a different way. But suppose a man who has accepted Christ commits sin. God must deal with that sin in that saved person's life. So God changes in his dealings with man according to man in his relation to the question of sin.

UNCHANGEABLENESS OF GOD - Bishop

Where I was raised back in Ohio we had a thing called a weather vane -- I don't see any around here. Every barn in the country had one. Most were in the form of a rooster perched on top of an arrow. Sometimes it pointed north, sometimes it pointed south, and sometimes it pointed east. It was changing wasn't it? Yes it was, but no it wasn't. It was always pointing into the wind. So the weather vane changed in its position in order to remain unchangeable in pointing toward the wind.

So it is with God in His relation to man. When man falls into sin, or when man is in sin never having come to God, then God has one attitude toward him. In the case of Saul, God chose him to be king, and yet we find that Saul failed in three really serious aspects. So God had to change His attitude toward Saul because Saul had changed his relationship to God in connection with the sins that had come into his life.

God's unchanging holiness requires that He treat the wicked differently from the righteous. And when the righteous becomes wicked then God changes His dealings again with that individual. A thermometer does the same thing, does it not? It changes according to the changes in weather, but it always registers the temperature.

Note: There is an element of grief in repentance, but grief does not change God's character. To say that God is unchangeable is not to say that God is immobile. We're not dealing with fate when it comes to God, nor the results regardless of the effect.

There was a busload of us visiting a place called Abu Gosh in Israel, one of several places that's pointed out as being the place called Emmaus in the Word of God. When we got back on the bus there happened to be a lady and two or three children waiting there. The bus driver came in and said, "Do you folks mind if this lady rides along with us?" Of course, we all said it was perfectly all right. We waited a while and she just stood there. We waited a while longer and she just stood there. The driver got in started the motor and backed the bus around and waited, and she just stood where she was. Finally the bus driver just pulled away, and he explained it to us. That lady was a Moslem; she was waiting for her husband; her husband wasn't coming; and she was making no effort to do anything about it -- it was simply fate. It's the Moslem god Allah who says, "This half to heaven and I care not; this half to hell and I care not."

But that's not the kind of God we have. We're not dealing with fate. We're dealing with free moral agents who are responding to an invitation of God, and God changes in His dealings with man according to man's relation to sin.

So God is in control of the universe. He can keep His promises. He can answer our prayers, and thank God for that. When Christ became incarnate -- in human flesh -- that did not change His deity at all, and so He, too, partakes of the unchangeable nature of God.

NOTES ON "THE ANGEL OF THE LORD"

by Willis E. Bishop

1. The Hebrew name for the true God is *YHWH*⁷
2. Due to an LXX inaccurate translation of Leviticus 24:16, the Jews did not pronounce this name but spoke the word "Adonai," which means "Lord."

LXX - "and he that names the name of the Lord let him die the death."

The translation should have read "blasphemes" instead of "names."

KJV, NASB, NKJB, MV - all O.K.

3. Many present-day translations indicate the presence of the Hebrew name by translating it LORD - all capitals.
4. "The angel of the Lord" appears twenty or more times in the Old Testament and in some cases can be clearly identified as God, whom we believe in those cases to be the pre-incarnate Christ.

See: Exodus 3:1-6
Judges 13:2-25

But do some other verses which say "the angel of the Lord" mean simply "an angel"?

5. After the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem, "the angel of the LORD" disappears from Scripture and nowhere appears in the New Testament.
6. KJV N.T. verses which should be corrected:

Matt. 1:20 (vs. 24 is O.K.)	Acts 5:19
Matt. 2:13	Acts 8:26
Matt. 28:2	Acts 12:7
Luke 2:9	Acts 12:23
	Acts 27:23 (of God)

* * * * *